

Al-Islah School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	889/6004
Unique Reference Number	119856
Inspection number	301488
Inspection dates	4-5 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Mrs Michèle Messaoudi

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Al-Islah School is an independent Muslim school that is registered to provide full-time education to 160 girls aged 11 to 17 years. There are currently no 17 year olds on roll. Admission into Year 7 is by examination. The school opened in 1995 with primary and secondary classes in a quiet part of south-east Blackburn. It is housed within a mosque complex. As the premises could not accommodate its expansion, it had to close its primary section in 2005. Most students are of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritages and come from the local area. At the time of the inspection, there were no students with a statement of educational need and the vast majority were bilingual or had English as an additional language (EAL). The school aims to *'nurture the intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual growth of Muslim children with the hope of producing confident, competent individuals who can go out into British society and contribute positively without compromising their beliefs and practices.'* It was last inspected in 2003.

Evaluation of the school

Al-Islah School provides a satisfactory quality of education and meets most of its stated aims. The majority of parents are satisfied with the quality of education. Students experience a satisfactory curriculum. Whilst the overall quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory, teaching is good. Consequently, most students make at least satisfactory progress and achieve highly in some subjects. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school is led by a thoughtful headteacher and dedicated staff who have improved the quality of education since the last inspection. Its provision for students' welfare health and safety is satisfactory. It complies with most of the regulations.

Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory, as it is broad and balanced despite the constraints imposed by the premises, and it places a great emphasis on students' personal development. It is planned in sufficient detail to support the teaching and, in most cases, to make useful links between subjects that make learning more meaningful. However, the necessity to leave the premises by mid-afternoon makes it impossible to run daily activities to enhance the curriculum. Students can be examined in ten subjects at GCSE level. In addition, Key Stage 3 students have art and food technology. Islamic studies, Arabic, Urdu, English language and literature and history

are strengths of the curriculum. Staffing difficulties have disrupted students' learning in some subjects. Whilst resources are just sufficient in range, quality and quantity to teach the curriculum, the present arrangements for practical science are inadequate; this has a negative impact on students' learning and progress in this subject. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) as a subject is adequate. ICT is used regularly in most areas of the curriculum. Provision for physical education (PE) is satisfactory. Personal development is fostered effectively through a programme of personal, social and health education that reflects the Islamic ethos of the school and citizenship. The programme of careers education is satisfactory and most students feel that the school prepares them well for their future. Students who have EAL are well supported in class and those who were at an early stage of learning English when they joined the school make good progress. Although the school has not yet devised a strategy to develop literacy in all subjects, the present staff plan language work in their lessons. There is no system in place to ensure that the needs of students with learning difficulties are assessed thoroughly and met appropriately. Consequently, these students do not achieve as well as they could.

Teaching is mainly good and assessment is satisfactory. All teachers have very high expectations of work and behaviour and good subject knowledge. They prepare their lessons well, ask probing questions that promote thinking and move on understanding, and use a wide range of methods that match various learning styles and maintain interest. Where the teaching is satisfactory rather than good, the pace is too slow, or does not make effective use of the available resources. There is a framework to assess students' work regularly. Teachers are informed of students' prior attainment and the school has recently put in place a system to track individual pupils' progress. However, this information is not analysed thoroughly and not utilised to plan how to improve teaching and learning in order to raise standards. For example, some teachers do not plan work that matches students' abilities sufficiently closely and in some subjects, the more able students are not sufficiently challenged. Marking is regular but rarely shows students exactly how to improve, although students report that they receive useful verbal feedback. Students are still insufficiently involved in assessment, and so are not always sharply focused on their next learning step.

Owing to the satisfactory curriculum, good teaching and satisfactory assessment, students' progress is satisfactory overall, and good in some subjects, in relation to their starting points. In the 2007 GCSE examinations, students achieved best in Islamic studies, Arabic, Urdu, English language and literature, and history. The vast majority of students move on to further education.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, underpinned by a consistent approach that permeates the whole curriculum. Students' behaviour, personal development and attitude to learning are

outstanding. Their good attendance and high level of participation in class, as well as the pride they take in presenting their work, demonstrate that they enjoy their education. The staff are excellent role models who create a mutually respectful, caring but firm, learning atmosphere and establish excellent working relationships. *'We love the discipline,'* students say, *'and teachers really care about us'*. However, there is a perception among some students and some parents that not all staff treat students fairly. The school is successful in encouraging students to take responsibility for their learning, their behaviour and their environment. For example, they have weekly opportunities to lead assemblies. During the inspection, Year 11 students presented their well researched topic of 'health and wisdom' in an engaging way, with humour and comments that invited the audience to reflect. Students' self-confidence, self-esteem and communication skills are promoted very effectively through numerous debates, competitions and public performances including drama and Qur'anic recitation. The maturity and poise they display in discussion reflect their spiritual awareness.

Students contribute to their school community by fulfilling many responsibilities. They organise school events with efficiency and enthusiasm. However, they would welcome the opportunity to contribute to decision making and to extend their skills by running their own projects. They are well prepared for life in a multicultural society as they learn about world religions and cultures through the curriculum. Whereas they enjoy a good number of indoor social and cultural activities, their cultural development is not enriched by a wide range of educational visits. This was highlighted by students and parents and inspectors agree. Students acquire basic literacy, numeracy, communication and organisational skills that prepare them for their future economic well-being.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Whilst this aspect of the provision is satisfactory, the quality of day-to-day care is good. The school has suitable procedures in place to minimize risks in all circumstances. However, the newly nominated person for child protection has not yet received the appropriate training and the policies required to safeguard and promote the welfare of students are not up-to-date to comply with the latest guidance. The school is a happy and well-ordered community in which students feel safe. The school promotes high levels of attendance and punctuality successfully. Although students learn about healthy living, the school does not provide sufficient opportunities for regular exercise. This was noted by many students and parents and inspectors agree with their view.

The proprietors have not devised a three-year plan showing how they will fulfil their obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The proprietors ensure that all staff are checked with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) for their suitability to work with children. However, their recruitment procedure is not robust, as not all the checks required prior to the confirmation of employment of all staff have been carried out. Two references have not always been obtained on staff and verification of their previous employment has not always been thorough. Consequently, the proprietors have been unable to complete the register to show that all the required checks have been carried out. They are already addressing both issues.

School's premises and accommodation

The school cannot use the premises beyond mid-afternoon. This prevents the lengthening of the school day to enrich the curriculum and provide more breaks. The teaching accommodation is fit for purpose, except for the absence of appropriate facilities for practical science. There are insufficient washrooms for the number of students on roll. The current facilities for students who are sick are inadequate as the room does not have a washbasin. The arrangements for outside play are just adequate. The school makes effective use of the local leisure centre for PE. It is actively seeking new premises.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school has recently updated its prospectus to provide accurate information to parents and others. Parents are invited to meet teachers formally twice a year and receive an annual report on their daughters' progress. Whereas some teachers' comments state what each student can do and needs to improve, some are not subject-specific and too general. Not all parents feel well informed of their daughters' progress. Most parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaires are supportive of the school.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has suitable procedures to ensure that complaints are handled fairly and promptly. However, not all parents say they understand these procedures.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- ensure that the curriculum provides the opportunity for all students to learn and make progress (paragraph 1(2)(i))
- ensure that teachers show a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the students, and that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons (paragraph 1(3)(d))
- provide resources of an adequate quality, quantity and range and ensure that they are used effectively in practical science (paragraph 1(3)(f))
- ensure that there is a framework in place to assess students' work regularly and thoroughly and that information from such assessment is utilised to plan teaching so that students can make progress (paragraph 1(3)(g)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- prepare and implement written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are students at the school in compliance with Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education* (2007) (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff, ensure that appropriate checks have been carried out to confirm their previous employment history, character references and, where appropriate, qualifications and professional references and that such information has been taken into account in determining whether their appointment will be confirmed (paragraph 4(2)(a))
- ensure that in relation to each member of staff in post on or after 1 August 2007, a register is compiled that shows checks made (and certificates obtained where relevant) of: his/her identity; qualifications (where required); whether an enhanced CRB was obtained, or where appropriate, that he/she is not working in contravention of section 142 of the Education Act 2002 (List 99); the right to work in the UK and, where relevant for those who have lived outside the UK, suitability to work in a school; and ensure that the register includes the date on which each such check was completed or the certificate obtained (paragraph 4C (2 and 3)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide sufficient washrooms for staff and students, including facilities for students with special needs, which take account of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(k))
- provide appropriate facilities for students who are ill, in accordance with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(l)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002 the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.

School details

Name of school	Al-Islah School
DCSF number	889/6004
Unique reference number	119856
Type of school	Day Muslim school
Status	Independent
Date school opened	September 1999
Age range of pupils	11-17
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Total: 160
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,000
Address of school	108 Audley Range Blackburn Lancashire BB1 1TF
Telephone number	01254261573
Fax number	01254261573
Email address	alislahschool@hotmail.com
Headteacher	Mr Nizamuddin I. Makda
Proprietor	Islamic Educational Society
Reporting inspector	Mrs Michèle Messaoudi
Dates of inspection	4-5 September 2007